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BELARUS

SUCCESS STORY

Helping Private Farming Take Root

Fruit farmers benefit from expertise, advice of American volunteers



USAID volunteer John Balles introduces Integrated Pest Management techniques to members of a Grodno, Belarus, fruit growers group.

After implementing advice from volunteers of a USAID program, fruit farmers from Belarus's Grodno region saw their production increase by 15 percent over the previous year.

Because of the healthy soil and a favorable climate, the Grodno area countryside has traditionally been a fruit production zone in Belarus. USAID and Grodno fruit growers have worked together to develop modern orchards that can produce high quality crops, thereby increasing incomes for the farmers and their employees.

USAID volunteer Randy Smith, a farmer from Washington State, provided training to 12 fruit growers in modern horticultural techniques for their apple orchards. In addition to teaching the fruit growers' modern orchard management practices, Randy expanded his assignment to include marketing, storage, and technology issues.

Another volunteer, John Balles, an experienced crop protection research manager from Michigan, introduced the farmers to Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques. IPM is a pest control system that combines steps such as monitoring pests, introducing natural predators, and using pesticides sparingly.

Their work with the Grodno fruit growers has paid off. The improved orchard management and crop protection practices they introduced resulted in a 15 percent increase in production and sales revenue over the previous year, leading to an increase in net income of nearly \$14,000 for the Grodno farmers. Now more prosperous, the group also created 10 new seasonal jobs and increased employee wages by an average of 30%.

The knowledge and skill gained from the volunteers gave the growers the help they needed to make more money and be successful in their role as pioneers of private farming in Belarus. USAID volunteers and Belarusian farmers worked together to increase not just their ability to make a living, but also their confidence, mutual respect, and understanding.